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Maritime Strategy: Building Partnerships to Protect the Global Commons

"The experiences we've had in the Arabian Gulf region helped us develop a deep appreciation for the challenges that face new countries and new navies. We hope we can assist Turkmenistan in increasing their abilities in the Caspian Sea through our expertise in maritime security operations and the defense of the Iraqi oil terminals."

-- Vice Adm. Kevin Cosgriff, Commander, U.S. Fifth Fleet

Fostering and sustaining cooperative relationships with global partners around the world is one of the six strategic imperatives of the Maritime Strategy. Navy deployments, exercises and exchange programs prepare our people at all levels to interact effectively within the U.S. interagency as well as with multinational organizations.

Fostering and sustaining cooperative relationships in action

- Africa Partnership Station – This week, HSV 2 Swift diverted to Douala, Cameroon to deliver 25 pallets of food products and medical supplies for Chadian residents escaping local fighting. Persistent presence and interagency experience allows the Navy to provide the flexible response required for this kind of crisis.
- Spitting Cobra 08 – Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit Five is conducting an exercise with the Indian Navy, improving interoperability, knowledge and expertise in EOD operations.
- Balikatan 08 – The USS Essex ESG and NECC units are participating in an annual bilateral exercise with the Republic of Philippines, fostering interoperability and capabilities in counter-terrorism.

The exchange of ideas and people – relationships must be built over time

- Mexican CNO visit – This month CNO hosts his Mexican counterpart, one engagement in a series of regular counterpart meetings to build personal relationships and encourage a free-flowing dialogue between leaders.
- Mid-level officer exchange with the People's Republic of China – In March, a joint U.S. contingent will meet with Chinese counterparts to explore common military interests, organizational roles, missions and capabilities, with the goal of demonstrating transparency and reciprocity in military-to-military engagements.
- Turkmenistan Delegation Visit – Last month, NAVCENT hosted a meeting with the Turkmenistan Minister of Defence and the Chief of the State Border Service (equivalent to the U.S. Coast Guard) on maritime infrastructure protection and maritime awareness. The first-ever meeting also established the framework for a long-term relationship aimed at improving maritime capabilities in the Caspian Sea.
- Naval Academy International Programs – USNA's growing immersion opportunities for midshipmen include professional exchanges, faculty-led cultural tours to strategic locations including interaction with APS, and study abroad opportunities, build our future leaders' perspective and ability to work with regional partners.

Partnership with the American people

This month, the Sea Services continue with the Conversations with the Country (CWC) in Portland, Ore., engaging business and academic leaders and students in open discussion on the future roles of the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard in protecting the homeland and the importance of U.S. seapower to our nation's security and prosperity. Upcoming cities include Denver, Los Angeles and Raleigh.

Key Messages

- Expanded cooperative relationships with other nations will contribute to the security and stability of the maritime domain for the benefit of all.
- Successful partnerships must include improving regional and cultural expertise through expanded training, education and exchange initiatives.
- Trust and cooperation cannot be surged.

Facts & Figures

- More than 150 participants from business, academia, and the general public attended CWC Houston.
- Almost 250 USNA midshipmen have participated in international programs in the past year, including semester studies abroad in 11 countries.
- The Maritime Strategy, "*A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*," is available at www.navy.mil/maritime/.